



Dr. Chris Belcher
Superintendent of Schools

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December 20, 2012

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am sending this letter in order to provide you with the best available information, to discourage rumors and to ask for your assistance. Some of you may be aware that there has been an increase in the number of rumors and chatter regarding a possible planned violent act at one of our high schools – mostly in the form of a gun being brought to campus or a possible shooting. We have also noticed a timing pattern for when the rumors and threats seem to escalate, specifically on Fridays. As with all threats, Columbia Public Schools and the Columbia Police Department have thoroughly investigated the rumors and can find no credible evidence or validity to the reports.

We take the safety and security of our schools and students very seriously. We will not tolerate threats of any nature, especially when they cause continual disruption to the school day and result in countless hours of work to determine their validity and secure the safety of students and staff. In an effort to eliminate such disruptions, the district has instituted the following policies and procedures effective for Friday, December 21:

- All high school campuses will be closed campuses on Friday, December 21. This means students will not be permitted to leave for lunch or AUT. Students will only be permitted to leave campus if there is a demonstrated academic need to do so, such as classes at MU, the Career Center, or other designated reasons (part-time student, employment or internship, parent permission, etc.)
- There will be strict controlled access to the buildings. Students will only be able to enter and exit the building through designated doors. Staff will be stationed at those doors to ensure controlled access.
- If determined necessary, students may be searched.
- There will be increased police patrols around the buildings.

The school district will continue to implement these controlled procedures as necessary in order to keep students and staff safe and stop the perpetuation of rumors and threats. The statements and rumors being spread constitute terroristic threats and are subject to punishment according to Board of Education policy, which could include, but is not limited to, expulsion from the school district. Students also need to be aware that law enforcement agencies are taking these threats very seriously and are pursuing prosecution even when such incidents are intended as pranks. Please make sure your child is aware of these ramifications and that he or she understands hoaxes related to campus safety will not be tolerated.

We need to come together as a community of students, parents and school personnel to end this disruption of learning. I urge you to talk to your children now and impress upon them the seriousness of threats and rumors in today's society, especially in light of the recent tragedy. Ask them to notify you or the school should they hear of any planned or potential disruptive behavior and to not become part of the problem by spreading rumors to friends or through social media.

The safety of our students and staff is our number one priority, and we will continue to be vigilant. Please feel free to call my office or call your high school principal should you have any questions or comments.

I appreciate your continued support of a safe learning environment for our students.

Sincerely,

Chris Belcher
Superintendent